

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 1757

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IZ, IR
SUBJECT: IRAQI-IRANIAN RELATIONS

REF: BAGHDAD 1295 (NOTAL)

1. ACCORDING TO IRAN'S NEW AMBASSADOR, FEREIDOUN ZANDFARD, HIS GOVERNMENT IS SOMETHING LESS THAN COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH IRAQ'S EFFORTS TO LIMIT THE ACTIVITIES OF AYATOLLA AL-KHOMEINI. THE IRAQIS ARE NOT PARTICULARLY APOLOGETIC, HE SAYS, AND INSIST THEY ARE DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO CONTROL WHAT AN INDIVIDUAL IS ALLOWED TO DO OR SAY IN A FREE SOCIETY. ZANDFARD CONTRASTED THIS ATTITUDE WITH THE CLEAR AND POSITIVE POSITION OF HIS GOVERNMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE KURDISH QUESTION AND MOVEMENT ACROSS THE IRANIAN BORDER.

2. AL-KHOMEINI'S "PEOPLE" ARE BEING ALLOWED TO MOVE FREELY
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IN AND OUT OF IRAQ, ZANDFARD SAID, AND HIS TAPES AND WRITTEN MATERIALS ARE BEING PASSED INTO IRAN AND OTHER COUNTRIES WITHOUT ANY HINDRANCE. THIS IS OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO IRAN, PARTICULARLY AT THIS TIME, AND TRANSCENDS THE SIMPLE MECHANICS OF RECIPROCAL ATTENTION TO THE INTERESTS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE DID NOT HAVE ANY THOUGHT ON WHAT, IF ANYTHING, IRAN INTENDS

TO DO ABOUT THE PROBLEM, BUT STRESSED THAT CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION IS BEING PAID TO IT IN TEHRAN.

2. ON THE LARGER QUESTION OF OVERALL RELATIONS, ZANDFARD EVIDENTLY BELIEVES THAT THEY HAVE BEEN PLACED IN A FAVORABLE LIGHT THAT IS BELIED BY ACTUALITIES. THE IRAQIS TALK A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THEIR DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN HIGH-LEVEL VISITS AND EXCHANGES OF WORKING DELEGATIONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, BUT NOTHING SOLID OR SUBSTANTIAL EMERGES. ZANDFARD SAYS HE FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO FOCUS IRAQI ATTENTION ON SUBSTANCE AS OPPOSED TO RHETORIC; EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE VERY SUPERFICIAL. IN CONTRAST TO THE EAGERNESS THE IRAQIS DISPLAYED FOR CONSULTATIONS ON AFGHANISTAN SHORTLY AFTER THE COUP, FOR EXAMPLE, ZANDFARD FINDS THERE IS NOW VERY LITTLE INTEREST IN PURSUING THE SUBJECT. HAVING JUST COME FROM ISLAMABAD, ZANDFARD WAS READY TO PICK UP ON THIS PARTICULAR INITIATIVE AND IS EVIDENTLY DISAPPOINTED IN THE LACK OF CONCERN.

3. COMMENT: ZANDFARD IS IN PART SUFFERING FROM THE BAGHDAD SYNDROME, WHICH ALMOST ALWAYS AFFECTS DIPLOMATS AND PARTICULARLY NEW ARRIVALS. HIS VIEWS CONTRAST RATHER SHARPLY WITH THOSE OF HIS PREDECESSOR, BUT THE LATTER WAS LEAVING. ZANDFARD IS NOT A NOVICE, HOWEVER, AND HIS INITIAL PERCEPTION OF IRAQI-IRANIAN RELATIONS IS PROBABLY CONFIDENTIAL

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REASONABLY ACCURATE.

4. IRAQ DOES NOT WANT TROUBLE WITH IRAN, FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, AND IS NOT INTERESTED IN CREATING SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES FOR THE SHAH IN THE SHORT RUN. THE LEADERSHIP PROBABLY DOES NOT PLACE THE ACTIVITIES OF AL-KHOMEINI INTO THE CRITICAL CATEGORY, GIVEN THE NATURE AND NUMBER OF THE VOICES RAISED INSIDE IRAN ITSELF, AND ALLOWING HIM TO SPEAK PERMITS THEM TO SATISFY THEIR REVOLUTIONARY SELF-IMAGE WITHOUT UNDUE RISK OF DAMAGE TO THEIR LARGER INTERESTS.

5. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE BASIC DIVERGENCIES BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR IRAQ TO DO MORE THAN DEAL WITH SURFACE ISSUES AND RELATIVELY MINOR ACCOMMODATIONS. IRAN APPEARS TO BE FAR MORE INTERESTED IN A BROADER AND DEEPER RELATIONSHIP THAN IS IRAQ AND THIS WILL MAKE LIFE FOR ZANDFARD MUCH LIKE THAT OF OTHER DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES HERE: FRUSTRATING.
PECK

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